

GOD'S MAGNIFICENT MASTERPIECE (MANUSCRIPT)

INTRODUCTION

Aim: To establish the splendor and beauty of the Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of the "Mona Lisa": -fails to compare to the beauty of what God has created in all of us. This lesson describes how one is saved by grace: through faith and obedience.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10; Ephesians 4:22-25; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:17-18

Outline.

1. Our Portrait Before Restoration
2. Our Portrait During Restoration
3. Our Portrait After Restoration

Introductory Remarks.

1. In our lesson today, we will discuss: "God's Magnificent Masterpiece." We can never hear or read enough about God's grace and how He has made us "a new creature in Christ Jesus." In this "Expository Sermon," we will be demonstrating the divine process of how God has "created in each of us a Masterpiece." We will view God's handiwork in creating us into His portrait of art in Christ Jesus. The elegance and beauty of the "Mona Lisa" fail to compare to the magnificent beauty of what God has created in each of us. **We are His work of sublime and radiant beauty**, a marvelous portrait of **Heavenly Essence!** Painted on the portrait of life, [if we can be living epistles...why not lively portraits], "to be known and admired by all men," 2 Corinthians 3:2. **When you feel down and out**; -unworthy, unwanted, unseen, unforgiven, and unloved. Remember beloved saints whose you are and by whom you have been created. **We are God's Masterpiece:** "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which He hath before ordained that we should walk in them," Ephesians 2:10. Amen!

2. First, we will consider "our portrait before restoration." The beloved apostle describes the Ephesians' former state before they were created as God's Masterpiece. He penned: "And you hath He quickened, who (were) dead in trespasses and sins...and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," Ephesians 2:1-3. **Then, we were** "without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. **But now in Christ Jesus**, we who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ... Therefore, we are no more strangers, and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," Ephesians 2:11-19. [Text shortened for brevity].

3. Second, we will discuss "our portrait during restoration." How Paul describes our condition, location, and who we were with when we were painted as God's Masterpiece. He inscribed: "God who is rich in mercy, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath 'quickened us,' making us alive, while with Christ." At that time, when we were together with Christ (by grace, we were saved). The precious hands of Jesus painted our portrait. He has put off the "old man" and put on the "new man" created in Him, unto the "praise and glory of God," a portrait of unique and splendid beauty.

4. Lastly, we will investigate "our portrait after restoration." In Christ, we have been created as God's magnificent masterpiece. **A replica of "God in righteousness and true holiness."** If any man "be in Christ, he is a new creation," or God's masterpiece of splendid beauty and heavenly essence! We are now the children of God, "through the faith in Christ Jesus," Galatians 3:26-27. **Peter wrote:** "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us

exceeding great and precious promises: that by these we might be **partakers of the divine nature** (of Christ), having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," 2 Peter 1:3-4. You now **have "divine presence"** with God. **With this brief introduction**, let's consider the first point of the lesson.

**Before introducing our first thought,
Please turn your Bibles to Luke 4:16-18.**

BODY OF LESSON

I OUR PORTRAIT BEFORE RESTORATION

A. Paul wrote: "You who were dead in trespasses and sins." The picture under reconstruction, restoration, and preservation has been damaged, abused, and abandoned; in the eyes of many, it is a worthless portrait of art, fit only to be discarded and destroyed. Like older works of art, "many are cast away; burnt up, discarded, with no desire of the artist to restore or make anew!" But with God, these human portraits of life can undergo reconstruction, restoration, and preservation operations, i.e., to repair damaged, abandoned, and worthless portraits of art no longer desired or wanted. However, in Christ, they can be restored; old things can become new! 2 Corinthians 5:17.

**Jesus' ministry unveiled
To call, heal, save, and restore, Luke 4:16-18**

1. In our former state. We were broken, incomplete, undone, battered, bruised, shackled, and ruined works of art: entirely of our abuse, mistakes, disobedience, and sins. Paul wrote Ephesus: "And you hath He quickened...dead in trespasses and sins," Ephesians 2:1-3. **To Create,**

a. He wrote: "For we also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another," Titus 3:3.

b. Paul again, "But after that, the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared...he saved us...that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life," Titus 3:4-7. We will return to this verse later in the lesson.

c. John wrote: "But God's grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," John 1:17; 2 Corinthians 4:6.

Please turn to Ephesians 2:11,

2. Paul wrote Ephesus: "Wherefore, remember, that you in times past were... without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," Ephesians 2:11-22. Review the high points in the text!

This was our picture once,

B. Like Corinth: "Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Review verses 9-10. Observe,

1. We once "were" like these: committing such behaviors or some of "these things."

Paul reminds,

2. The Corinthians: "But you are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Corinthians 6:11. We no longer walk in them, having been delivered. **And,**

3. The Colossians: "That God has delivered them out of the power of darkness, and translated them into the kingdom of His dear Son," Colossians 1:13. But now in Christ! This defines our present state.

4. We have a divine presence! Our portrait hangs in the Gallery of Heaven. I will speak more about this later in the lesson. **Let's consider point 2.**

II OUR PORTRAIT DURING RESTORATION

A. But God, who is rich in mercy. Paul defines the greatness of God's mercy for us (himself and the Ephesians). Let's consider Ephesians 2:4-10. Turn there, please. Notice Paul,

1. "But God who is rich in mercy wherewith He loved us." God's love was, is, and always will be the basis for His outpouring "of the exceeding riches of His grace upon us," Ephesians 2:7.

2. "Even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins." God chose us in Christ. And He,

3. "Hath quickened us together with Christ," Ephesians 2:5. **Paul affirms,**

**While we were together WITH Christ
God has granted us.**

NOTE: Mercy when **He withheld** from us what was deserved: His wrath, punishment, and death.

NOTE: Grace when **He bestowed** unto us what was undeserved: His love, mercy, and forgiveness.

Conclusion

4. Paul's portrait of our condition during this "quickening" is when we were "dead in trespasses and sins." We were "**conjoined (planted next to),** or **(united with)** Christ" in our worst and most pitiful condition. Sinful, without hope, and Christ in our lives. But God's love granted us His mercy, grace, and forgiveness.

NOTE: This lesson is our concluding discussion of the "grace of God." You might remember the following few points previously declared unto you. **Consider,**

He quickened us!

B. God quickened us together. We must discuss the meaning of "quickened" again. Recall,

1. Paul uses an action word, the verb: "quickened," to describe this process. Together with who? Christ! What is meant by "quickened" in this context? We consulted,

NOTE: W. E. Vine's dictionary defines "quickened" to mean: 1) To **make one alive** together (alongside); 2) to **reanimate (conjointly)** with; or 3) to **revive one unto spiritual life**. This life is imparted to believers at the time of their conversion to Christ, page 241. See John 6:63; Romans 8:11.

Listen to Paul,

2. First, "When we were dead in trespasses and sins." It was then that He did this thing! It was then. When was it? "When we were dead in trespasses and sins."

3. Further, "God quickened us." Paul adds himself to this "spiritual awakening."

What did He do?

4. Finally, He "quickened," or "reanimated us conjointly with (Christ): —or together with Him." Quickening means to be "made alive." This awakening occurred while we were: "dead in trespasses and sins" and being planted together "in the likeness of His death," Ephesians 2:5; Romans 6:5.

The only time,

NOTE: This is the only time we were or will have been with Jesus in our sins! Now I know this begs the question: “Can anyone be with Jesus while in their sins?” Paul describes our condition (dead in trespasses and sins), action (quickened together), and person (with Christ) during our awakening! It looks like we were with Jesus while in our sins!

Place of atonement!

a. Paul is discussing the place of atonement; he likens it to “God’s mercy seat”—our place of redemption, washing, regeneration, and forgiveness, Hebrews 9:5; 1 John 2:1-2; Ephesians 1:7.

NOTE: Illustrate “The Day of Atonement,” Leviticus 16:1-34. Time does not permit me to discuss the topic thoroughly. So, I will say that this was Jesus’ work for us *behind the veil* when He entered heaven: “He by Himself purged our sins, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” Hebrews 1:3. He is *the propitiation* or “the mercy seat,” the place of, and for our redemption: the forgiveness of sins, Romans 3:24-26; Hebrews 9:5. This occurred when we were with Christ! Dead in our *trespasses and sins*! While being “*planted together* in the *likeness* of His death,” Romans 6:5.

Christ is our mercy seat.

b. Paul tells us where God’s mercy, grace, and forgiveness abide! God forgave us of our sins and trespasses when we were with Christ: “*Through the faith* of the operation of God,” Colossians 2:12.

c. God’s “mercy, grace, and forgiveness” was granted to us through “our *faith and obedience* to the gospel,” Romans 1:16; Romans 10:16-18. We’ll **make this connection** in our last point.

Paul connects grace with this quickening.

C. He wrote: (By grace, you are saved). This occurred “when we were conjoined or united with Christ?” When we were “dead in trespasses and sins,” Ephesians 2:5. These are not my words, but Paul’s, an apostle of Jesus Christ! You might recall that **we discussed,**

1. Paul uses the “parentheses” here to explain the **real meaning** of the word “*quickened*.”

NOTE: BLB.org, Cross-References, KJV Phrase, “Grace ye.” In Gr., “(by whose grace you were saved),” Ephesians 2:5; Romans 5:1-2.

2. “Parentheses” are used **to clarify further, explain, or discuss** a “word, phrase, or sentence” previously mentioned to enable a complete understanding of it.

In this case,

3. The phrase “united together” **holds two fundamental truths:** 1) “*A quickening*” and 2) “*By grace, we were saved*.” These two things occurred when *we were together* with Christ! **Question,**

What did God do?

a. He: “Put off the old man” and “Put on the new man,” Ephesians 4:22-25.

b. He: “Put off the body of the sins of the flesh,” Colossians 2:11.

c. He: “Crucified the old man with Him and destroyed the body of sin,” Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20.

4. Creating in you His Magnificent Masterpiece “in Christ Jesus,” Ephesians 2:10.

NOTE: God reached out to us in our worst condition: to “quicken us” [“make us alive”] and to “save us by His grace” while we were with Christ [dead in our trespasses and sins]: “**Through the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost,**” Titus 3:4-7; John 3:3-5.

Listen to David's

NOTE: Prayer of remorse to God: “**Behold, thou desireth truth** in the inward parts (**inward man**); and in the hidden part (**the spirit**) thou shall make me know wisdom. **Purge me with hyssop**, and **wash me**, and I will be whiter than snow...**Hide thy face**...**Create a clean heart**, O God, and **renew my right spirit**. **Cast me not away**... and **take not thy Holy Spirit** from me...**Restore unto me** the **joy of thy salvation**... **Then will I teach** transgressors thy ways, and **sinners shall be converted** unto thee,” Psalms 51:6-13. [Text shortened for brevity]. This is what **Paul is writing** about in the book of Ephesians. We will *revisit this washing* later. **But for now,**

What else did God do?

D. Finally, “**And (He) has raised** us together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” Ephesians 2:6. We have a divine presence: at the Table of the Lord, in the House of God. **Turn your bible** to Ephesians 1:13. **Let's witness,**

The Ephesians' Conversion

1. We have witnessed the Ephesians' "pattern of conversion" in picture form: after the Gospel was preached to them, it was believed and obeyed. **Consider these,**

2. The facts outlined in the Gospel were heard, believed, and received, Ephesians 1:13-14.

a. The Ephesians heard the “word of truth, the gospel of their salvation.”

b. Paul penned: “In whom also you trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,” Ephesians 1:13.

Notice Paul's words,

1) They *heard the word* of truth, *the gospel* of their salvation.

2) They *believed* the message: “the good news” of the gospel.

3) They *were “sealed* with that Holy Spirit of promise.”

NOTE: The “seal” is the assurance and certification that they have believed and obeyed the gospel.

c. When did all this occur? Let's look now at when all this occurred and how.

Please turn your Bibles to Acts 19:1

3. The “form” of the doctrine these Ephesians, the Romans, and we have believed and obeyed. We now learn of it in Paul's return visit to Ephesus. He finds certain disciples and questions them regarding their faith. [The Holy Spirit guided and allowed him to look into their hearts].

NOTE: Ask a brother to read this text as you comment. [Give him the text before you preach so he can be prepared to read it confidently]. **Paul asks,**

Two important questions

4. First, “**Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?**” Acts 19:1-2. Are your eyes on this text? Stay with me; this is going to get good!

- a. Their response, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."
- b. This might be a question you should be asking now!
- c. Since I believed: "Have I received the Holy Spirit of promise?"
- d. Paul asked his next question, sensing in the Spirit that something was absent in their faith.

5. Second, "Unto what then were you baptized?" Acts 19:3.

NOTE: Now wait a minute, brother; the Ephesians "were saved by grace." Baptism wasn't required, preacher! Don't you know about "saved by grace alone?" Let's notice what they say.

- a. Their response: "And they said, unto John's baptism," Acts 19:3.
- b. Their answer revealed to Paul why they had not "received the Holy Spirit since they believed."
- c. They had been "baptized unto John's baptism," Acts 19:4. **Paul speaks of John** the Baptist.
- d. John preached "the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel," Matthew 3:11; Acts 10:37; Acts 13:24-25.
- e. John's baptism did not grant the repentant believers the "remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit," Acts 2:38; Acts 5:32.

6. Paul preached unto them "the message of the gospel," Acts 19:5.

a. **When they heard this:** "What did they hear, believe, and obey?"

- 1) "*The word of truth, the gospel of their salvation*," Ephesians 1:13; Acts 20:20-21; Acts 20:24-25.
- 2) "*They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*," Acts 19:5; Acts 22:16.
- 3) "Then they were *"quickened"* and *"saved by the grace of God*," Ephesians 2:2-5.
- 4) "They received the *"remission of sins* and *the gift of the Holy Ghost*," Acts 19:1; Acts 2:38.
- 5) "Then, they were *"sealed with the Holy Spirit* of promise," Ephesians 1:14; Ephesians 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22. In Gr., "seal" is *sphragizo*, which means to stamp for security or preservation!
- b. **"And when Paul** had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them (to empower), and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied," Acts 19:6-7; Joel 2:28-29. They *were empowered* to speak in *tongues and prophesy*!
- c. **"And all the men** were about twelve," Acts 19:7.
- d. These are undoubtedly the first leaders in the church of Ephesus, Ephesians 4:11-12. See also 1 Timothy 1:3-4; 1 Timothy 4:14; 1 Timothy 5:17.

Review the Facts and Form of the Doctrine

1) The facts are these, "That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: That he was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures," 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Luke 24:44-47.

- a) The "facts" are revealed in the gospel's message, Romans 10:16-18.
- b) The "facts" are the contents of Esaias' Report, Isaiah 53.
- c) The treasurer heard, believed, and obeyed them, Acts 8:26-39.

2) The believer "obeys from the heart, that form of doctrine," Romans 6:17-18.

- a) This form or "act of obedience" typifies (embodies) the likeness of Christ's death and resurrection.
- b) Paul penned: "For if we have been planted together (with Him) in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection," Romans 6:5. What do you mean, Paul? Simply!

c) The sinner “dies to sin, is buried with Christ, and rises to walk in newness of life,” Romans 6:1-7.

d) We will witness this act of obedience in the last point of this lesson. Stay with me, church!

The only question remaining unanswered

7. In our discussion of the facts and form, is this: -- *Where does the sinner: “Obey from their heart that form of doctrine, being then made free from their sin?”* The answer is moments away! **Finally,**

Paul mentions

E. God’s exceeding riches. He wrote: “That in the ages to come; He (God) might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus,” Ephesians 2:7.

1. All “spiritual blessings are in Christ,” Ephesians 1:3.

2. All the “elect of God” are saved in Christ, 2 Timothy 2:10.

3. All the “children of God” are in Christ, Galatians 3:26-27.

NOTE: Review “God’s Plan for the Elect” on SermonCentral.com. For a complete discussion of “all the spiritual blessings” in Christ Jesus. **Let’s consider our last point.**

III OUR PORTRAIT AFTER RESTORATION

A. For “by grace, are we saved *through (the) faith,*” Ephesians 2:8. We are now at the defining place in this lesson where the doctrine of grace in the religious world differs significantly from what Paul has written in this Letter. Grace is granted through the sinner’s faith and obedience to the Gospel. **Recall,**

The apostle wrote,

1. To Rome: “But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. **For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?**” Romans 10:16. **Luke wrote:** “And many priests were obedient to the faith,” Acts 6:7. **Paul said** unto King Agrippa: “**I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision,**” Acts 26:19.

2. Again, “So, then (the) faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God,” Romans 10:17. He means hearing and obeying “Isaiah’s Report,” Romans 10:16; John 12:37-38. Let’s tie it together,

Paul asks **two rhetorical** questions,

3. Has all heard? Yes. “But I say, did not Israel know?” Romans 10:18-21.

4. Have all obeyed? No. “But all have not obeyed the gospel,” Romans 10:16.

What does he mean?

B. By this charge (indictment): “They have not all obeyed the gospel?” We discussed the “facts of the gospel and the form of the doctrine.” Let’s examine this form more thoroughly! Please turn your bibles to Romans 6:17. **Paul inscribed,**

1. To Rome: “But God be thanked, that:”

a. “You were the servants of sin.”

b. “But you have **obeyed** from (Gr., ek -out of) the heart that form of the doctrine.”

c. “Being then **made free** from sin.” Romans 6:5-7; John 8:30-32.

d. “You became servants of righteousness,” Romans 6:17-18; Romans 6:22.

2. Obeying from the heart “that form” of the doctrine: “fulfills all righteousness,” Matthew 3:13-17.

3. What was that “form” these saints “obeyed from their hearts?”

4. We will witness it together NOW! Paul continued,

Justification in Christ!

C. Paul's customary message of justification in Christ was granted: "through the faith." He advised the Ephesians that it was NOT their faith whereby they were saved. But their salvation was made possible "through the faith," or their faith and obedience to: "The gospel of the grace of God," Acts 20:24.

Someone might ask,

1. "Is there a "pattern of conversion" in the Bible? Many believe God saves all who believe in Him. They say: "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as your heart is right." But I beg to differ! God has given His grace to all, but the sinner must accept this grace on His terms.

NOTE: Illustrate God's gift of grace, which is given to all, but all have not accepted it "through faith and obedience to the gospel." Will a loving brother give me a \$5.00 bill, please? Now you are giving this to me. You will not get it back! Okay, will a wonderful sister give me a \$5.00 bill, please?

2. We reviewed the pattern of conversion earlier in the lesson. This pattern includes both faith and baptism.

NOTE: Review the man at the Pool of Bethesda in John 5:1-9. For him, "healing" was in the water after the angel troubled it. Cleansing is in the water when you get in it with Jesus!

3. Paul preached the same message to Rome he had preached to Ephesus. Therefore, "Esaia's Report" must be heard, believed, and obeyed. We now know what needs to be obeyed.

Esaia's Report!

D. The facts of the Gospel are contained in "**Esaia's Report.**" Paul wrote: "*But they have not all obeyed the gospel.* For Esaia saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? **So, then, faith cometh** by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (*the facts of the gospel*)," Romans 10:16-18. **Consider this,**

1. Many today have heard the Gospel and even believe it. But many still need to OBEY IT! Why?

2. Thus, "Isaia's Report" includes hearing, believing, and obeying it. What does God require?

Our Faith and Obedience

3. The truth is: "Man's faith and God's grace come together to save the sinner while being with Christ?" The sincere repentant believer will obey the gospel without argument or debate, just like John's disciples whom Paul taught near the upper Coast of Ephesus.

In Baptism

4. The sinner undergoes: "The washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 3:20-21. To all repentant believers: "The washing of regeneration means:"

a. To "Have obeyed the good news or the gospel," Romans 10:16.

b. To "Have been planted in the likeness of His death," Romans 6:5.

c. To "Have been buried with Him in the baptism," Colossians 2:12.

d. To "Have been forgiven of all trespasses and sins," Colossians 2:13.

- e. To "Have been given the gift of the Holy Ghost," Acts 2:38; Acts 19:1-7.
f. To "Have been added to the church, the kingdom of God," Acts 2:41; Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13.

NOTE: [See the attachment at the end of this lesson]. **The wise man Solomon noted,**

There is a generation

5. "That is pure in their own eyes and yet is not washed from their filthiness," Proverbs 30:12; Proverbs 14:12. **Paul penned,** "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith: having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure (purifying or cleansing) water," Hebrews 10:22. Let's consider as we move to a conclusion. We are now at the highlight of this lesson! This describes the work of art God has created in all of us.

God's Magnificent Masterpiece!

E. God's magnificent masterpiece. Paul now concludes his discussion of the Ephesians' salvation by grace with these words: "For we (including himself) are His workmanship (masterpiece), created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Ephesians 2:10. One translation of the word "workmanship," is "masterpiece." This is an excellent picture of who we are NOW in Christ. **I began this lesson by stating,**

We are God's work of art!

1. The "Mona Lisa" portrait is the painting of an Italian woman, Lisa del Giocondo. [She was a member of the Gher-ar-dini family of Florence and Tuscany, Italy].

2. This spectacular work of art pales in beauty to what God has made in us through (the) faith in Christ Jesus. Our portrait painted by God is far more beautiful than the "Mona Lisa."

NOTE: Antuenet, when I picked you up from your little walker and gazed into your face, you were more beautiful than the "Mona Lisa." Marcella, when I beheld your face shining with radiant beauty as you "kicked and grinned" at me as a little girl. O' the joy of a father for his baby girls. Carolyn Freeman, you are my honey bunny! Sisters of the E. Street church of Christ, I have no words.... Brothers in the Lord, remain strong and courageous in the faith. For,

3. In Christ, we all have been created as "God's Magnificent Masterpiece."

4. We are a replica of the very image of God: "Created in righteousness and true holiness," Ephesians 4:24.

Peter penned,

5. According to, "His divine power hath (He) given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature (of Christ), having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," 2 Peter 1:3-4.

God's children have divine presence!

NOTE: God gave us Christ's "divine nature" to have a "divine presence" before Him in heaven. We can approach Christ on His throne "as kings and priests of God," Revelation 1:5-6; Hebrews 4:15-16.

Continue in them,

6. Which God hath before “ordained that we should walk in good works,” Ephesians 2:10; Matthew 5:16; Galatians 6:7-10. Therefore, walk in them as “saints of light,” Colossians 1:12-13. **Observe,**

a. Paul wrote: “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, and behold, all things have become new,” 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:9-10.

b. What God has created in us is far more beautiful than the “Mona Lisa.”

c. God looks at your heart. **We look at the outward appearance.**

NOTE: Illustrate Samuel’s anointing of David as king. Jehovah told Samuel: “Do not look at his appearance or stature because I have rejected him (or these). Humans do not see what the Lord sees, for humans see what is visible, but the Lord sees the heart,” 1 Samuel 16:7. Christian Standard Bible (CSB). I ask the audience: What does God see in your heart right NOW? **I recall a conversion experience,**

During a Gospel Meeting

At the Downtown Church of Christ

d. In San Francisco, CA. I participated in this gospel meeting some years ago. On our way to visit a member in the hospital (me and another brother), we passed a young woman sitting on the steps outside her apartment – looking over the SF Bay. The brother and I vowed that if she were there on our way back, we would present the “gospel of Christ” to her. She was, and we did. **As we began,**

1) She said, “I was gazing at the Bay and asked God if there was something better for me and my children in this life?” You already know how this visit turned out!

2) After a brief discussion of God’s love, grace, and willingness to grant her a “more abundant life now, and eternal life in the ages to come,” John 10:10; Titus 1:1-3, Titus 3:4-7. While witnessing a deluge of tears running down her face, I asked: Do you want **to confess Christ** to be the Son of God?

3) Immediately after taking her “confession of Christ.” We drove her and her children to the “Downtown Church of Christ” and baptized her “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” Acts 19:5. You should have seen the joy and happiness on her face that day. She attended several nights of the meeting and was fed the “word of God” by the acclaimed Richard Rogers from the SSOP (then). Now, SIBI, which is based in Lubbock, TX. A great teacher and preacher of the word of God.

4) God saw a magnificent masterpiece willing to accept His call of grace, believe Esaias’ Report, and obey the gospel of Christ that day. This opportunity is yours today if your heart is like this young lady’s. Who asked God: “Is there something better for me and my children in this life?” Yes, it was for her and can also be for you and your family. Now we’ll speak to them,

Beloved saints of God

7. What does your HEAVENLY FATHER see in your life? He sees a “magnificent masterpiece” which He has created in Christ Jesus. What do you see of yourself through your own eyes?

NOTE: Illustrate the “outward and inward man,” 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Please turn to this text as I close out this lesson. **Paul wrote about,**

The outward and inward man

a. First, “Though our outward man perishes,” 2 Corinthians 4:16. Due to the toils of life.

b. Next, “Though I face troubles on every side, -- yet I’m not distressed; though perplexed (dismayed and confused), -- I’m not in despair; though persecuted, -- I’m

not forsaken; and though cast (thrown, knocked) down, -- I'm not destroyed," 2 Corinthians 4:8-10.

NOTE: It is this person God continually works to strengthen, restore, reclaim, and perfect! Paul reminds us [that though the outward man perishes],

c. Finally, "Yet the inward [man] is renewed daily. For our light afflictions, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding [and] eternal weight of glory," 2 Corinthians 4:17.

d. Conclusion: "For while we look NOT at the things which are seen, BUT at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen [are] temporal, but the things which are not seen [are] eternal," 2 Corinthians 4:18; Romans 15:4; Hebrews 11:1. I wish I had some help!

James's two mirrors

8. James, the Lord's brother, describes believers looking into two mirrors. The first is the mirror of glass. The second is the mirror of the word. **James wrote about,**

Our natural face

a. The mirror of glass. He penned: "But be you doers of the word...not hearers only...For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For *while* he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was," James 1:22-24. This is our natural man's physical appearance.

1) We can only see a reflection of the "natural man," which is constantly changing, continually decaying, and soon to "vanish away," James 4:14. This man continues to experience all the hardships and trials of life (sickness, diseases, and death). However,

2) While you look in a glass mirror, what do you see? [A person may be a "little overweight, wrinkled in the face, balding at the head, battered, bruised, wounded, and abused].

3) The natural man. He is ever-changing. This is the person we admire and desire to keep beautiful and youthful! But it continues to perish "day after day." This is not the person God sees. What our heavenly Father sees is,

Our spiritual face

b. The mirror of the word. God views the "inward man" or the "hidden man of the heart," 1 Peter 3:4. James continued: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth [therein], he is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word [and works of God], this man shall be blessed in his deeds," James 1:25; Matthew 7:21-27. **Hold on to your seats,**

1) We see our spiritual faces through the perfect law of liberty. It examines, exposes, corrects, and instructs us, while God chastened us "as a loving Father," Hebrews 12:5-13; 2 Corinthians 13:5.

2) The perfect law of liberty reveals our spiritual man's divine nature given to us by Christ. Our Father is pleased when our lives abound in love and good works. This man and woman will be blessed in their deeds.

3) However, when walking in disfavor, He reminds us of His love and the blessing we're "casting aside": --for "He is faithful in His promises." Our Father watches to correct and not to condemn!

4) Paul indited: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto His eyes with whom we have to do," Hebrews 4:13.

c. We look into the glass mirror to see (our natural face) the outward man. Likewise, we examine the mirror of the word (the perfect law of liberty) to reveal (our spiritual face) the inward man.

d. God delights in the inward man, the hidden man of the heart. Therefore, seek to please Him and accomplish His will and purpose. [Keep your eyes and heart in His word to become more like Him daily]. This is the magnificent masterpiece God loves and approves of each moment of our lives.

- 1) He's a heavenly Father who cares about you!
- 2) He approves of you and will always love and adore you!
- 3) We are His "first love," Revelation 2:4.

Remember, beloved of the Lord,

e. We are "God's magnificent masterpiece of splendid beauty and heavenly essence!" Ephesians 2:10. Our portrait of life can be viewed in the gallery of heaven, Hebrews 12:1-2. Along with all those whose portraits are now on display in the "Roll Call of Faith," Hebrews 11:1-40. **Never forget,**

- 1) We were called to be His children, cared for, loved, and preserved, Galatians 3:26-27. Continue to put on all the Christian graces: "Adding to our faith: [virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love]," 2 Peter 1:5-11.
- 2) His grace has forgiven us of all our sins "through our faith and obedience to the gospel," Romans 1:16; Romans 10:16-18. You can be confident that "God is faithful that promises," 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 10:23.
- 3) We are "saints in the Beloved," the church of the Lord, Ephesians 1:6.
- 4) We were created in Christ Jesus "unto good works," Ephesians 2:10.
- 5) Let's walk in them, James 1:21-25.

As I conclude this lesson, you have been a patient and kind audience. Recall, I said...

CONCLUSION

A. Outline.

1. Our Portrait Before Restoration
2. Our Portrait During Restoration
3. Our Portrait After Restoration

B. Summarize main points.

1. First, we considered "our portrait before restoration."
2. Second, we discussed "our portrait during restoration."
3. Lastly, we investigated "our portrait after restoration."

C. Invitation. Present God's pattern of conversion. Jesus said: "Come unto me all ye that labor," Matthew 11:28-30. [Explain the POC, i.e., hearing and believing the Gospel; repentance of all past sins; confessing faith in Christ, as the Son of God; and then, by obeying the Gospel; that is to: "repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," Acts 2:38; Romans 6:17-18; Ephesians 1:12-14]. See the attachment below.

D. Exhortation. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved," Jeremiah 8:20.

E. Motivation. Do as Peter directed: "Save thyself," Acts 2:40; Acts 2:36-39; Acts 2:41.

NOTE: This truth also agrees with Paul's Letter to the Romans and the Colossians. If your preacher doesn't preach this, ask him why. I suggest that you read Romans 6:1-7

and Colossians 2:11-13. No one should leave this assembly, not knowing when and where: they were saved by God's grace.

THE PATTERN OF CONVERSION

Attachment to lesson: God's Magnificent Masterpiece

1. The Ephesians heard the gospel. Paul wrote: "After that, you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that, you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise: Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory," Ephesians 1:13-14. They heard the word of truth, the gospel of the grace of God. Paul had preached to them and now writes to them: "Dispensation of the grace of God," Ephesians 3:1-7; Ephesians 1:10.

2. The Ephesians believed in the gospel. Luke wrote: "Paul, testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more," Acts 20:24-25. They heard and believed: "The gospel of the grace of God," Acts 20:24; Ephesians 2:8-9.

3. The Ephesians repented. He said: "I kept nothing profitable unto you, but I have taught you publicly and from house to house. Testifying to the Jews and the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ -while preaching unto them the gospel of the grace of God," Acts 20:20-21; 2 Peter 3:9.

4. The Ephesians confessed faith in Christ. Luke wrote: "And many that believed came, confessed, and showed their deeds... So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed," Acts 19:18-20. The repentant believers must confess their faith in Christ as the "Son of God," Matthew 10:32-33. Paul wrote: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness. With the mouth, confession is made unto salvation," Romans 10:9-10. You will tell the world now, "You believe Christ is the Son of God," Acts 8:37. But, for the rest of your life's walk with Him, you will profess your faith and trust in Him as your Savior and Lord, 1 Timothy 6:11-12.

Finally, the Ephesians were baptized, even as other repentant believers. Luke wrote,

5. The Ephesians were baptized. Paul finds certain disciples of John on his return to Ephesus, Acts 19:1-7. He asked them: "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? And they said... And he said unto them: Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said... Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus," Acts 19:1-7. As I conclude,

6. Conclusion: The repentant believer meets Jesus in baptism. He is buried with Him while dead in trespasses and sins. There, he is quickened, or (made alive), and saved by God's grace. The believer is then raised in Him to sit with Him in heavenly places. Baptism is God's mercy seat, the place of atonement and restoration. He forgives the repentant believers' sins and trespasses, who become "the children of God," Galatians 3:26-27. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Galatians 3:14; Acts 2:38; Acts 5:32. Made heirs of eternal life, Titus 3:4-7. If not, why not?

Consultations and Commendations

I submit this verse unto you that I may: "Render therefore to all their dues: tributes to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; and honor to whom

honor, (is due),” Romans 13:7. I acknowledge my consultation with these distinguished authors in this lesson.

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